

Fundamentals of New Testament Greek

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Preface

This volume has been many years in the making. It began with sections written on an almost weekly basis to provide material for elementary Greek students. In teaching Greek, we found that many of the introductory textbooks available were not as helpful for learning the language as we thought they should be and as we thought our students demanded. Many of these books indeed had fancy charts and glossy covers, but they lacked what we considered essential for learning Greek — balanced attention to dealing with the grammar and vocabulary of the language. Some of the grammars had students learn only a small number of words, a limitation justified by the argument that these were the words that students would encounter most often. Yes, the Greek New Testament is filled with words translated “the,” “in,” and the like, but if one knows primarily only those words, one is doomed to miss most of the content of the New Testament. One needs to know a good number of the words that appear less frequently, as well as the more common words. Other grammars, we found, offered very little actual Greek. Some presented modern sentences created by the author that were consciously designed to illustrate the point being taught. The result was often rather tiresome sentences such as “The prophet threw the tree by the shore into the lake early in the morning.” But better (probably) this kind of sentence than grammars that offer virtually no Greek passages or even sentences at all — substituting merely the memorization of paradigms for gaining fluency with the mechanics of the language. Before one can expect to glean exegetical insights, one must know the language that one is exegeting. For that, there is no substitute for learning vocabulary and grammar and, most important, becoming familiar with real texts of the language.

We have tried to make this a grammar that provides all that a first-year student should gain — including exposure to enough vocabulary (over 950 words); all forms of Greek verbs, nouns, and adjectives, with explanations of their derivation to aid in memorization; clear and helpful paradigms that consolidate all of this information into memorizable form; and basic comments on syntax and word order and their significance. The volume concludes with

- a bibliography
- the formulas for creating the various verb forms
- a listing of the various personal endings on verbs, plus infinitive endings and participle markers
- a discussion of the accent of all verbal forms
- a complete set of paradigms
- a list of principal parts of the most important verbs, which will help in recognizing verb formation

- a Greek-to-English listing of all vocabulary items
- a full subject index
- a two-page “quick grammatical index.”

The workbook that accompanies this textbook features exercises that are grounded in the language itself, reading exercises that utilize the grammar and vocabulary learned, and aids to analysis and translation. We know that this is a very full, comprehensive, and perhaps even challenging grammar. We also believe that there is no substitute for serious and rigorous study of the Greek of the New Testament. We know that this book works and will take students to a level not often achieved through other beginning textbooks.

In the course of our studies and teaching, we have learned much from our own teachers, our colleagues, and especially our students. We thank them all for their many and various contributions. We have tried to incorporate as many of their insights and ideas as possible into this grammar. For some students, this will be the only textbook that they study. We hope that we have provided enough so that, with the aid of a lexicon, they can begin to read entire chapters and even books of the Greek New Testament with profit and delight. We would suggest beginning with a book such as 1 John or the Gospel of John, then progressing to Mark's gospel or one of the shorter Pauline letters (other than Philippians, which is regularly used in the exercises). For others, this will be but the entrance to further Greek study, perhaps including exegesis classes, where the language is scrutinized in detail for its theological, historical, and linguistic insights; or rapid-reading classes, where students try to get as many texts under their belt as they can; or further language and linguistic study, such as intermediate and advanced grammar classes.

Students tend to retain their first-year grammar as the “bible” that guides all of their further study. This elementary Greek textbook, however, is designed as only the first step in an ongoing and developing project of Greek language learning, including further reading exercises and intermediate and advanced language-learning tools. We would thus encourage students to plan to move on to more advanced texts. An intermediate-level text is in preparation to accompany this volume and to take students to a more advanced level of understanding. In the meantime, we encourage students to use an intermediate handbook written by one of the authors of this textbook, Stanley Porter's *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; New York: Continuum, 1994). Those interested in more advanced study of Greek verbs may wish to consult Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Lang, 1989). A reader of extrabiblical Greek texts, with vocabulary and commentary, a book on textual criticism, and a handbook to exegesis are also in preparation and will provide further tools once one has mastered the fundamentals of the language.

We would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for using this grammar and for giving helpful comments in its various stages of development. The individuals include especially Brook W. R. Pearson, who used this textbook on several occasions, made helpful suggestions along the way, and helped to compile useful vocabulary lists. We also wish to thank Sean A. Adams, Lois K. Dow, James Dvorak, Michael Fast, Andrew W. Pitts, James Scott, and Catherine Smith for their help in reading, proofreading, and commenting. We are also thankful to Michael Thomson for his role in having Eerdmans publish this book and the accompanying workbook. We wish especially to thank our phenomenal editor, Craig Noll, who has greatly improved and refined this work at every stage. It has been a

great pleasure to work with him. This text has been used at Talbot Theological Seminary of Biola University, La Mirada, California; Trinity Western University and Northwest Baptist Theological College and Seminary, Langley, British Columbia; and the University of Surrey Roehampton, London. The students who have made a variety of suggestions as a result of their use in the classes at these institutions have aided greatly in its development.

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